



HAUPPAUGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

495 Hoffman Lane, P.O. Box 6006
Hauppauge, New York 11788

June 10, 2021

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, New York 12224

Howard Zucker MD, JD, LLM, Commissioner
New York State Department of Health
Corning Tower
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12237

Re: Face Masks in Public Schools

Dear Governor Cuomo and Dr. Zucker:

We are the Presidents of the Teachers Association and Board of Education of the Hauppauge Union Free School District, and we write to express the concerns of our community, Administration, and employees regarding the events of the past week.

Through the hard work of the District and its community, Hauppauge was one of the *very* few districts in the State that was able to successfully run both an in-person instructional program for every grade throughout the entire 2020-2021 school year, as well as robust synchronous "distance learning" for students whose parents wanted them to stay home. We were able to achieve this while at the same time complying with all State and CDC mandates and best practices concerning COVID.

Through it all, our community discovered a lot about itself and also the disease. We learned that when we pull together for a common goal, we can accomplish even those things other districts told their constituents were not possible. We also learned that while only about 12% of our students opted for distance learning, that cohort represented an inordinate percentage of our positive cases. Indeed, only 1 out of every 21.66 "in-person learners" contracted the virus, while 1 out of every 4.56 "distance learners" contracted the virus. Stated otherwise, the students in school were 5 times less likely to catch COVID than those that stayed home. Moreover, "community spread" within the school was non-existent. Simply, our buildings were the safest place for our kids.

Today, more than 70% of our staff have received vaccinations, and all have had the opportunity to do so if they desire. Our facilities and classrooms are large, our buildings are well-ventilated, and most areas are air-conditioned.

Up until now, we have advised our community that notwithstanding Dr. Zucker's letter last Friday, the State's mask mandate inside schools remains in place. However, the decision regarding masks in our schools must be made at the local level, not in Albany. The unique circumstances in



June 10, 2021

Page 2

Hauppauge allow us to eliminate the indoor, across-the-board mask mandate while still ensuring the safety of our students and staff.

For these reasons, we assume that the State will immediately amend its guidance to allow each local district the ability to decide what is best for its community. Therefore, while we intend to continue to encourage voluntary mask wearing, beginning Monday June 14, we assume we will be able to no longer require that masks be worn by students and staff where other methods for safe social distancing are possible.

Sirs, it is time to take the masks off in schools and let the kids breathe, see each other's smiles and enjoy being kids again.

If there is any data or science that you are aware of that contradicts our approach, please let us know.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Until then, we remain,

Respectfully yours,

David M. Barshay, Esq., President
Hauppauge Board of Education

Respectfully yours,

Kevin Giachetti, President
Hauppauge Teachers Association